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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Informal open-ended working group
on the organization of the work
of the Commission

Geneva, 12-23 September 1994

Analysis of the organization of the past three sessions
of the Commission on Human Rights

Report of the Secretary-General

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Introduction

1. In its decision 1994/111 entitled "Organization of the work of the session", the Commission on Human Rights decided to convene an informal, open-ended working group, open to all participants, under the chairmanship of the Chairman of its fiftieth session for a maximum period of 10 working days to discuss:

(a) The reclustering of the Commission's agenda with a view to proposing a provisional agenda for the fifty-first session;

(b) Organizational matters related to the above, including the organization of work and documentation;

(c) A preliminary inventory of other reforms.

2. In the same decision the Commission also decided to request the secretariat to prepare an analysis of the organization of the work of the past three sessions of the Commission on Human Rights, including its fiftieth session, to be used for reference purposes at the meeting of the open-ended working group.

3. The secretariat has prepared the present analysis in response to that request. Statistical data relating to the work of the forty-eighth, forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the Commission on Human Rights are provided in the annexes. These statistics concern the utilization of conference resources, documentation issued, attendance, statements made, resolutions and decisions adopted, and the number of mandates established, at the three sessions in question.

4. An interpretation of these statistics is made in the first part of the analysis. In the second part, a number of suggestions for the rationalization of the work of the Commission are put forward. These suggestions are intended to serve the working group as a basis for discussion.

I. INTERPRETATION OF THE STATISTICS

Utilization of conference resources

5. The number of meetings held has risen from 57 during the forty-eighth session to 69 during each of the following two sessions, if informal meetings with interpretation are included. This represents a 21 per cent increase.

Duration of meetings

6. The total duration of meetings at the fiftieth session of the Commission decreased by 21.95 hours as compared to the forty-ninth session, but increased by 18.90 hours as compared to the forty-eighth session. The time lost has been diminishing, especially if the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions are compared. During the fiftieth session the time lost was 5.95 hours less than during the previous session, an improvement of nearly 35 per cent.

Number of pages printed

7. The number of pages of documentation printed for the Commission has sharply risen. According to Conference Service statistics, the increase was 18,019 pages for the forty-ninth session over the total for the forty-eighth session. This is an approximately 30 per cent increase. The increase mainly concerns

the general documents, as is shown in the table in annex II. But, as can also be seen, all the other types of documents show a consistent increase in number of pages over the three sessions in question.

Attendance

8. As is shown in annex I, the number of participants increased by 356 persons at the fiftieth session as compared to the forty-eighth session. The increase concerned observers of States not members of the Commission and representatives of United Nations bodies, but also included a rise of nearly 200 in the number of representatives of non-governmental organizations registering to attend.

Number of documents

9. Over the past three sessions the number of documents issued has grown considerably (see annex II). The total has increased from 379 at the forty-eighth to 496 at the fiftieth session, which is a rise of approximately 31 per cent.

Number of statements

10. The number of statements made under the substantive agenda items remained more or less at the same level over the past three sessions. The number of statements per category of speaker also remained more or less the same.

Date of submission of documents

11. With regard to the date of submission of documents, for the fiftieth session of the Commission out of 86 pre-session documents only 26, approximately 30 per cent, were submitted for processing within the time limit of 10 weeks before the start of the Commission (see para. 20, below). For the forty-ninth session, only 11 out of 69 pre-session documents were submitted within the time limit, approximately 16 per cent. And for the forty-eighth session, only 3 out of 58 pre-session documents were submitted within the time limit, around 5 per cent. Although the proportion is still no more than 30 per cent, which is unacceptably low, the number of pre-session documents submitted within the time limit has thus risen considerably.

Number of mandates

12. As can be seen from annex I, the number of mandates has increased over the period of the three sessions in question, from 19 on-going mandates at the forty-eighth to 25 on-going mandates at the fiftieth session. The number of pre- and intersessional working groups has also increased.

II. SUGGESTIONS

13. The Working Group may wish to consider the following suggestions:

A. Reclustering of the agenda, with a view to proposing a provisional agenda for the fifty-first session

14. The following proposal has been presented regarding the question:

The draft provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission as proposed by the Chairman of the fiftieth session (E/CN.4/1994/127).

B. Organizational matters

1. Management of the list of speakers

15. The Commission should maintain strict observance of its decisions regarding the length and number of statements, and the length and number of statements in exercise of the right of reply.

16. The delivery of statements by NGOs should be organized in a better way. For example, they should be requested to make joint statements. A strict rule should be established that NGOs refrain from making similar statements on the same cases of violations of human rights under several agenda items.

17. A rule should also be established that a speaker takes the floor only once for a cluster of related items considered concurrently, instead of being able to speak about each item separately. This could be a general rule for members, observers and NGOs.

2. Meetings

18. The scheduled meeting hours should be used to the full extent, and additional meetings should be held only in case of absolute necessity and scheduled after careful planning.

3. Documentation

19. Both the number of mandates and the workload related to such mandates have been growing rapidly. This has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in human and other resources available to the secretariat. The consequent ad hoc arrangements for the servicing of these mandates by the secretariat has already created serious difficulties in maintaining a high quality of work. Drastic measures are necessary to improve the situation.

20. There should be much stricter observance of the rules

concerning the submission of documents, to make sure that documents are available in time. The general rule, which is reiterated in a note by the Secretary-General of 16 August 1993 (A/AC.172/INF/15), is that pre-session documents should be distributed not less than six weeks before meetings, in all languages. This requires documents to be submitted for processing 10 weeks in advance of the start of the session in order to allow sufficient time for editing, translation, typing and reproduction. For the last three sessions only 40 out of 214 pre-session documents were submitted within that time time.

21. Strict observance of the rule concerning the number of pages is also indispensable; documents exceeding the limits are not acceptable by documents control. As is also reiterated in the above-mentioned note by the Secretary-General, documents should not exceed 32 single-spaced pages. Documents exceeding this limit can only be processed if a waiver concerning their length is applied for and granted. (In this connection, the attention of the working group is also drawn to the cost of processing documents that are issued in all six languages: \$ 1,100 per page). The increasing number, late submission and excessive length of documents, which makes it impossible to process them in time, has led to the undesirable situation in which a large number of documents are unavailable in several official languages even by the end of the session, and delegations are thus unable to study them.

22. One of the main reasons for late submission of documents is the desire of the special rapporteurs to provide the most up-to-date information possible in their reports. However, in practice a considerable number of reports have been submitted so late that their non-availability has prevented the Commission from planning its timetable efficiently. A possible solution to this problem is for special rapporteurs to submit the main body of their reports on time, and if necessary, update them subsequently by means of a short addendum. The present practice of submitting complete reports during the session places a huge burden on the documents processing services, in addition to the in-session workload, and makes it almost impossible for these reports to be distributed before the end of the session.

23. The special rapporteurs, representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory services programme, held a meeting at Geneva on 30 May and 1 June 1994. Among the recommendations formulated by the participants at that meeting was support for the idea of postponing the annual session of the Commission for two to three month (E/CN.4/1995/5, para. 26 (d)).

24. The quality of documents in the form in which they are initially submitted for editing is often below average. It should be emphasized that this can considerably prolong the time it takes to process them. The establishment of a minimum standard of quality would contribute to shortening that time. Documents of a lower quality than the minimum standard should not be accepted.

4. Draft resolutions and decisions

25. Extensive revision to the original text of draft resolutions and decisions should be avoided as far as possible, for it places an additional burden on the documents processing services. Any substantial revision could be considered as a new proposal by the Commission.

26. Deadlines for the submission of draft resolutions should be adhered to strictly. The present practice of frequently postponing deadlines at the request of negotiating parties, has lead to a situation in which the deadlines announced are no longer taken seriously.

C. A preliminary inventory of other reforms

27. Overlapping consideration of the same subjects in both the Commission and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities should be avoided as much as possible. This would imply further rationalization of the agenda of the two human rights organs.

28. At its forty-fourth session, in 1992, the Sub-Commission adopted guidelines concerning its methods of work (resolution 1992/8). A similar approach could be adopted by the Commission.

Annex I.

STATISTICAL DATA RELATING TO THE WORK OF FORTY-EIGHTH, FORTY-NINTH
AND FIFTIETH SESSIONS

1. Utilization of conference resources

<u>Session</u>	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>
Number of meetings planned	60 (plus 40 additional meetings)	60 (plus 40 additional meetings)	60 (plus 40 additional meetings)
Number of meetings held	57 (plus 21 informal meetings with interpretation)	69 (plus 24 informal meetings with interpretation)	69 (plus 14 informal meetings with interpretation)
Additional meetings used	15 plenary meetings extended to the equivalent of 16 additional meetings	3 plenary meetings extended to the equivalent of 6 additional meetings	5 plenary meetings extended to the equivalent of 10 additional meetings
Additional meetings for the working group	2 equivalent to 2 additional meetings	1 equivalent to 1 additional meeting	None
Total duration of meetings in hours	219:40	260:25	238:30
Overtime in hours (beyond normal three-hour limit)	None	1:30	1:05
Number of meetings cancelled	1 (3 hours)	1 (3 hours)	None
Total hours lost	17:20	23:05	11:35
By late starting	1:05	2:55	0:20
By early ending	13:15	17:10	11:15
Cancelled/not scheduled	3:00	3:00	None

2. Documentation

<u>Session</u>	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>
Total number of pages printed in all official languages	47,574	65,593	Not yet available
Costs (notional)	\$43,010	\$46,898	

3. Attendance

<u>Sessions</u>	<u>Delegations</u>			<u>Participants</u>		
	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>
Members	53	53	53	444	424	524
Average size of delegation				8.37	8.00	9.88
State Members of the United Nations represented by observers	72	84	85	342	384	381
Average size of delegation				4.75	4.57	4.48
Non-member States	2	2	2	11	11	11
United Nations bodies	5	9	13	16	24	51
Specialized agencies	4	4	7	24	21	26
Intergovernmental and other organizations	8	10	12	28	33	38
National liberation movements	2	3	3	10	7	5
Non-governmental organizations(total)	152	158	156	728	857	923
Average number of persons per NGO				4.28	5.42	5.91
Category I	19	18	17	50	64	61
Category II	97	103	103	526	613	663
Roster	36	37	36	152	180	199
Total attendance	296	323	331	1603	1761	1959
Average size of delegation				5.41	5.48	5.77

4. Guest speakers ("dignitaries")

<u>Session</u>	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>
Guest speakers	29	23	28

5. Resolutions and decisions

<u>Session</u>	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>
Resolutions adopted	82	98	97
Decisions adopted	19	16	12
Draft proposals withdrawn	0	5	0

6. Mandates

<u>Session</u>	<u>48th</u>	<u>49th</u>	<u>50th</u>
Ongoing mandates	19	22	25
New mandates	3	5	5
Confidential mandates	2	0	0
Pre- and inter-sessional working groups	3	3	5

Annex II.

STATISTICS CONCERNING THE NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS AND NUMBER OF PAGES OF THE SESSIONS

Session	Forty-eighth		Forty-ninth		Fiftieth	
	Documents	Pages	Documents	Pages	Documents	Pages
1. General documents	84		122		131	
Reissued	0		6		4	
Addenda	19		22		28	
Corrigenda	6		4		15	
Revisions	1		1		2	
total	110	4527	155	4789	180	5555
2. L. documents	82		107		104	
Reissued	0		5		2	
Addenda	28		36		31	
Revisions	6		38		17	
total	116	867	161	1149	154	788
3. NGO documents	45		53		54	
Reissued	0		0		0	
Addenda	0		0		0	
Corrigenda	0		0		0	
Revisions	0		0		0	
total	45	185	53	181	54	270
4. Order of the day	30	74	30	116	30	102
5. Inf. and Misc. documents	4	160	4	100	4	187
6. Summary records	57		70		69	
Addenda	16		10		5	
Corrigenda	1		1		0	
total	74		81		74	
7. Report of the session		473		535		673
Total	379	5813	484	6335	496	6902

Notes:

Number of pages submitted in the original language for processing;

Documents prepared for inter- and presessional working groups not included;

Summary records page numbers not included in the total.

Annex III.

STATISTICS OF STATEMENTS AT SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-eighth session

Item	Members	Observers	NGOs	Others	ror.memb.	ror.observ.	Total
4 + 9	32	18	21	4	10	4	89
5, 6 + 14	23	9	11	2	0	1	46
7, 8, 15 + 1	38	6	28	1	2	1	76
10	29	11	37	5	11	8	101
11	17	4	19	0	4	1	45
12	42	30	65	7	27	18	189
13	2	1	7	0	0	0	10
17	13	3	13	1	1	0	31
18	10	3	10	0	1	0	24
19	16	8	19	0	0	1	44
20	13	3	11	1	3	4	35
21	1	1	2	1	0	0	5
22	15	7	19	1	0	3	45
23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	17	1	3	0	0	0	21
Total	268	105	265	23	59	41	761

Forty-ninth session

Item	Members	Observers	NGOs	Others	ror.memb.	ror.observ.	Total
4 + 9	35	21	37	1	17	7	118
5, 6, 15 + 16	30	14	14	1	1	3	63
7, 8, 17 + 18	34	14	36	1	3	2	90
10	30	9	5	3	13	8	68
11	17	13	25	2	0	3	60
12	36	21	67	7	21	15	167
13	1	0	6	0	0	0	7
14	1	1	5	0	0	0	7
19	9	1	17	1	2	0	30
20	13	7	15	0	4	0	39
21	5	6	9	0	0	0	20
22	4	4	14	1	2	2	27
23	5	1	1	2	0	0	9
24	18	9	19	1	0	0	47
25	17	1	6	0	1	0	25
26	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
28	0	0	11	5	6	3	25
Total	255	122	293	25	70	43	808

Notes:

Others = any other statements than the ones mentioned.

ror.memb. = rights of reply by members.

ror.observ. = rights of reply by observers.

Fiftieth session

Item	Members	Observers	NGOs	Others	ror.memb.	ror.observ.	Total
4 + 9	26	12	17	2	9	2	68
5, 6, + 14	29	12	15	5	0	0	61
7, 8, 15 + 16	44	11	26	2	0	0	83
10	17	12	41	5	20	5	100
11 + 19	52	26	37	3	0	0	118
12	41	26	70	12	19	19	187
13, 18 + 20	16	12	29	2	9	4	72
17	17	6	16	2	3	1	45
21	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
22	18	9	14	1	2	0	44
23	4	0	2	0	0	0	6
Total	267	127	269	35	62	31	791

Notes:

Others = any other statements than the ones mentioned.

ror.memb. = rights of reply by members.

ror.onserv. = rights of reply by observers.

Annex IV.

STATISTICS CONCERNING THE TIME SPENT ON (CLUSTERS OF) ITEMS

Forty-eighth session

Items	Opening	4,9	5,6,14	7,8,15,16	18	20	10	17	24	11	12 c	12	22	19	23	Voting	Total
Meetings	1,00	6,00	5,00	4,17	1,50	2,50	5,50	1,17	1,83	1,67	2,33	10,67	1,83	0,83	0,17	9,83	56,00
Hours	3,00	18,00	15,00	12,50	4,50	7,50	16,50	3,50	5,50	5,00	7,00	32,00	5,50	2,50	0,50	29,50	168,00

Forty-ninth session

Items	Opening	4,9	5,6,15,16	27	7,8,17,18	20	25	22	28	19	10	11	12b	12	24,3	21	13,14,23	Voting	Total
Meetings	1,50	9,17	1,50	4,50	4,33	2,00	0,33	1,00	1,67	1,83	7,00	2,50	3,83	11,67	2,50	1,00	1,00	12,67	70,00
Hours	4,50	27,50	4,50	13,50	13,00	6,00	1,00	3,00	5,00	5,50	21,00	7,50	11,50	35,00	7,50	3,00	3,00	38,00	210,00

Fiftieth session

Items	Opening	4,9	5,6,14	7,8,15,16	13,18,20	17	10	11,19	12	12b	22,23	24	Voting	Total
Meetings	2,00	5,67	4,00	7,33	3,67	2,50	6,83	9,33	12,00	2,00	2,00	1,00	10,67	69,00
Hours	6,00	17,00	12,00	22,00	11,00	7,50	20,50	28,00	36,00	6,00	6,00	3,00	32,00	207,00

Note: One meeting corresponds to three hours.